SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION AND BUILDING UTILIZATION STUDY

On February 17, 1983, following the formal presentation to the School Board of the School Consolidation and Building Utilization Study, the Board asked the Superintendent to prepare a written rationale for the various building utilization plans based upon the criteria approved by the School Board. The Board also asked for the Superintendent's recommendations regarding the School Consolidation and Building Utilization Study.

On February 17, the Superintendent met with members of his immediate staff and procedures were implemented for preparing the report on criteria. On Tuesday, February 22, at the regular weekly Cabinet meeting, a draft copy of the report was analyzed and corrections and revisions were proposed that were to be ready for the Superintendent's review on Tuesday, March 1. After a careful review, final improvements were agreed upon and a staff report on rationale for the various building utilization plans based upon the approved criteria was completed. I endorse that report. The following recommendations, based upon the consolidation and utilization study, are those of the Superintendent.

Grade Configuration. As stated in the February 17 report, the members of the Cabinet and the Superintendent support and recommend the K-6, 7-8, 9-12 grade configuration. While I, personally, prefer grades 6-7-8 for an intermediate school program, it is my professional judgment that in Arlington at this particular time, continuing with the current successful 7th and 8th grade program is best. The Arlington educational program for students of this age group does meet most of the educational and social needs for early adolescents as supported by research. The basic element missing is that of time. In a two-year program, students are either coming from elementary school, or going to senior high school. I do not support a three-year junior high school nor a three-year senior high school program for the same reason that Arlington changed from such a program a few short years ago. Basically, today's grade 9 youngster is better prepared to relate to older secondary students than to younger. Therefore, I heartily endorse the continuation of the 6-2-4 plan for Arlington.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

I agree with the School Board regarding the value of the alternative programs and recommend continuation of the following programs.

Page Traditional School. It is recommended that the Page Traditional School be relocated to a larger school with facilities to enroll grades K-8. It is further recommended that enrollment continue to be restricted to two sections of each grade level. To remain effective, the school must continue to be small and personal and at an average of 25 pupils per grade level; a K-8 program would enroll 450 students. This is not too large to inhibit close personal interaction, yet is large enough to support a full staffing component for an alternative school. A recommendation on a site will follow.

Drew Model School. The Drew Program should continue in its present facility and continue to house grades K-6. The school should continue to function as a combination neighborhood and district-wide attendance area, and the community component should also continue.

The only change recommended for Drew is to discontinue the use of the term "model school" and ask the parents and staff to agree upon a statement of philosophy acceptable to the School Board and use a descriptive term in the school name. It is my understanding that at one time Drew was a "model school" for the desegregation program.

Clay-Langston Programs. The Clay Program should continue, but be relocated to the Hoffman-Boston building. Staff informs me that the secondary program functioning at Clay School can be accommodated in the Hoffman-Boston building by better utilization of space and the relocation of the puppeteer program. The puppeteer program can be transferred to space available in Gunston or another suitable site. All other community programs would remain intact at Hoffman-Boston.

The relocation of the Clay Program to Hoffman-Boston would provide for the use of a secondary school facility, place this alternative program option in south Arlington, and continue the commitment to use the facility for educational purposes.

It is recommended that the Clay property be transferred to the county. It is further recommended that this change be authorized for the 1983-84 school year.

The Langston Program should continue in its current location. Staff reports that the evening portion of the Langston Secondary Program has been transferred to Washington-Lee and the day school portion of the program is functioning well and fits in with other community programs operating at the Langston building. No further changes are recommended for Langston at this time.

H-B Woodlawn Alternative Program. This program should continue to serve grades 7-12 and should continue in the Stratford building. In addition to no disruption of program, the advantages of having access to facilities designed for secondary students is obvious. There appears to be no significant gains associated with moving the program to another secondary building, and while the Claremont School site is attractive, due primarily to its proximity to Wakefield and Drew, the limitations of an elementary school for a secondary program, coupled with its limited number of classrooms (9), seems to make it less desirable as a location for the H-B Woodlawn Program. The Stratford building is reasonably close to Washington-Lee if shared services are needed and is convenient for school bus service.

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

In the 6-2-4 configuration plan recommended, it is further recommended that the existing senior high school programs be continued at Wakefield, Washington-Lee and Yorktown High Schools. However, boundary lines should be redrawn as indicated in Option I of the comprehensive report so as to provide for a better population balance and a better balance in racial and ethnic diversity.

An analysis of projected enrollment figures compared with the functional capacity of the schools reveals that while Wakefield and Washington-Lee could house all students in grades 9-12 as of September, 1984, each school would be unnecessarily crowded. Obviously, Yorktown and one of the other schools could not comfortably house the student enrollment in the immediate future. When one looks at the current enrollment, projected decline, and subsequent enrollment gains projected for the 1990's, one must question the reasons for closing a senior high school at this time, especially when it is recognized that each of the schools are in reasonably good physical condition and that each has the

necessary facilities to offer a quality educational program. Further, the addition of grade 8 students to the buildings would not resolve the basic secondary school problems.

One must return to the original concerns that generated a study of secondary schools. In addition to declining enrollment, concerns were expressed about the availability of multiple course offerings, advanced placement opportunities, as well as a student body of sufficient size to support a comprehensive extra-curricular program of quality. All very legitimate concerns.

Building principals report, and have documented, that no matter the school size, there will always be class schedule conflicts with resulting "singletons" of offerings. Literature reports that when building principals must reduce course offerings due to enrollment decline or fiscal constraints, it is the elective classes that get cut while all required courses and college preparatory classes remain. Such appears to be consistent with the experiences in Arlington. With a sound academic program in place, supported by a comprehensive career and vocational center, it is my opinion that each of the senior high schools can continue to offer a balanced program of studies for students in grades 9-12.

The issue of extra-curricular activity competition must also be addressed. While it is recognized that a larger student body in one school building would produce a greater number of students with exceptional skills in athletics, music, drama, debate, etc., it must also be recognized that fewer schools would provide fewer opportunities for individuals to participate. The concern over extra-curricular activity competition can best be addressed by considering the formation of new leagues comprised of schools of similar size and/or the organization of single district teams rather than single high school teams in those areas of limited participation.

For the reasons stated above, it is believed that the three Arlington senior high schools continue to meet all local, state, and national criteria for a senior high school program and should be continued. Programmatic improvements can result through the changes recommended above, plus the use of such options as independent self-study (correspondence) classes and greater use of community college facilities. Instructional transfers should also be considered through a task force assignment.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

Chapter 6 of the School Consolidation and Building Utilization Study was included because the School Board is still deliberating over an appropriate grade configuration for the Arlington Public Schools. The literature overwhelmingly supports a transitional program between elementary school and senior high school. The Cabinet supports continuation of the intermediate school program. I agree with that position and urge the School Board to continue the successful intermediate program for grades 7 and 8, implemented in Arlington in 1978 after careful consideration by community and staff.

As stated in the consolidation study, the decision as to whether there should be three or four intermediate schools for grades 7 and 8 could not be made on the basis of enrollment since two schools could handle the enrollment and the four schools today provide a very fine program, though the small enrollments can not be justified on the basis of educational criteria for an intermediate school. Consolidation is warranted on that basis alone.

It is recommended that there be three intermediate schools with attendance boundaries that are the same as for the three senior high schools recommended earlier.

Parents have regularly appeared before the School Board requesting this provision. Further, the student population of 1800 to 2400 students can comfortably be housed in three buildings. Also, the student body size of each of the schools would be within the range that the administration and School Board found desirable in past deliberations that created the Intermediate School Program when the alternative program enrollments are considered. As stated earlier, the current program meets most of educational and social needs for this age group.

It is recommended that the Swanson Intermediate School be closed and the other three schools be continued. Swanson should then be used for the Page Traditional Alternative School Program. The reasons for closing it as an intermediate school do not negate its viability as an elementary school.

The reasons for this particular recommendation has little to do with all the criteria against which recommendations for utilization must be judged. All four existing intermediate schools are providing a program of studies that meet approved criteria. The issue simply becomes - which intermediate school should be closed?

Swanson was selected for the following reasons:

1. It is the oldest and the smallest building. It is also located on the the smallest site.
2. Except for Thomas Jefferson, Swanson is the most expensive in cost per square foot for operation, as an intermediate school.
3. It has three floors, while Kenmore has one and T.J. and Williamsburg have two. The more floors, the more difficult it is to supervise and to provide for handicapped students.
4. It has a smaller enrollment than Kenmore or Thomas Jefferson, and about equal with Williamsburg.
5. It is located in the northern portion of the county. Three intermediate schools should be located across the county and as central to the attendance areas as possible.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

On June 16, 1982, the School Board approved a resolution introduced by a member of the Board which requested the Superintendent to prepare a specific elementary school consolidation proposal which would address the following points:

1. The concept of two classes per grade level at each school.
2. Be long-range.
3. Be coordinated with any secondary school proposal.
4. Express preference for schools with "traditional" classrooms.
5. Alternative elementary schools be continued.

On November 5, 1982, the School Board approved a resolution requesting the Superintendent and staff to develop two or more options for building consolidation plans that would utilize 14 or 15 neighborhood elementary schools.

The Board has asked in its guidelines for "long-range" plans, suggestive of a move to larger elementary schools to accommodate any further enrollment decline.

The Board has established a minimum of two classes per grade level as an objective in its guidelines for elementary schools. I strongly support this objective, for as elementary schools in Arlington dropped to less than two classes per grade level, serious organizational hardships developed, especially in schools with a wide range of student needs.

When staff examined the need for expanded services (HILT, ESOL, Special Education, Gifted and Talented) with the variety of buildings available, they concluded that an important system goal should be to favor larger and more modern elementary buildings. Annual repairs and upgrading of almost every school building over the past two decades have created a situation where it is difficult to distinguish one building from another on this basis. The best one can do is focus on the buildings with low enrollment or low functional capacity and then create regions or groups of schools. From within the group, the least functional building can then be closed to obtain the instructional advantages open to schools of greater student size.

The Board expressed a preference for elementary schools with "traditional" classrooms. A decade ago, Arlington was building "open space" elementary schools. Today, the staff of each school, in concert with parents, develops its own school plans, and does not base its program on the architecture of the building. Therefore, as stated on page 50 of the main report, the design of the building will not be considered as a major factor in my recommendations.

Careful study of student test scores indicates that it is impossible to differentiate statistically among the Arlington schools in terms of student improvement. While the schools often differ in performance levels, they are remarkably similar in terms of the rate (percentage) of student improvement (see Social Studies Thinking Skills test results) or in terms of keeping achievement levels equal to ability levels (see SRA test results). The educational program is effective. Students are learning at a rate consistent with capability.

In a 1979 comparison of academic innovation at Ashlawn and Reed, the Superintendent found it necessary to conclude that praise of Reed's exploitation of its site should

not work to Ashlawn's detriment, even though it strengthened Reed's case (memorandum ot October 25, 1979, footnote, page 9). A discussion of the arguments made by Reed and Ashlawn parents and staff concerning other factors again highlights the difficulty of comparing subjective qualities of various schools. For the most part, neither quantitative nor qualitative factors can be used to compare student performance.

It was recommended that most of the buildings closed as a part of consolidation be retained by the School Board. Whatever uses are made of closed buildings, other community programs should continue. I introduced the concept of "marketability" in comparing school buildings. By that I mean determining whether a building has a dual use as a community center, or is located adjacent to commercially zoned property, thus having value for rental and is located in the middle of a residential area. In the staff report, several examples were listed.

Marketability is an important concern, but definitely secondary to the instructional needs of the school system and the instructional potential of each building. For the most part, the physical characteristics at each school do not lend themselves to differentiation among the schools.

As stated earlier, a long-term reorganization is planned, which addresses the desire to minimize the impact of redistricting on students. It is recognized that while there are costs to be reduced, there will also be a set-off in potential increases in busing costs. The primary factor in busing plans and elementary boundaries should be student safety, ethnic balance and contiguous boundaries; cost should be secondary. Rather than having elementary students cross major arterial streets, the plan should provide busing even short distances to ensure student safety.

Another aspect of the community climate in Arlington is perhaps the most important single factor to consider in consolidation, even more than instruction. It is a sense of equity for all members of the school community (students, parents, teachers, administrators and taxpayers). There is no school community that has volunteered to have its school closed to meet the instructional and financial needs of the system. The only possibility may be one when a group uses a "Woodmont-Taylor" initiative to obtain a satisfactory merger.

Those areas where schools are closed will be best able to accept the decision if they sense the equity of the overall reorganization plan. I have attempted to consider the following guidelines in an effort to assure equity:

1. School closings should not be limited to one area of the county.
2. A better balance of south, central, and north schools will result from consolidation.
3. Public hearings will provide the community with opportunity for input at each stage.
4. Racial and ethnic balance should be improved by the consolidation process.
5. Sufficient recognition of special neighborhood needs and preferences for instructional philosophy will be observed, including open schools and traditional schools.
6. A variety of choices will continue to be available, including instructional transfers, alternative schools and special education classes.
7. Programs should be uniform by grade level in all schools. Facilities should fit the program.

Use 14-15 Elementary Schools. In a review of boundary considerations, I have identified three areas where elementary enrollments indicate a need to reduce the number of schools for instructional reasons.

Area 1	Abingdon
	Claremont
Area 2	Barcroft
	Barrett
	Henry
Area 3	Ashlawn
	Glebe
	Jamestown
	McKinley
	Nottingham
	Reed
	Tuckahoe

Due to the flexibility of boundary revision at the elementary level, the only factor that can be applied effectively is that of regional equity. I recommend that one school be closed in each of Areas 1 and 2, and that two schools be closed in Area 3.

The choice within each area is based on the factors of functional space and marketability. All other factors are relatively equal.

Area 1. Close Claremont and move its total population to Abingdon. As stated on page 163 of the main report, Claremont cannot accommodate the combined enrollment while Abingdon can. The facilities at Abingdon exceed those at Claremont.

Area 2. Choosing among these three schools was difficult. It is true that Henry's marketability is due to its location in the Career Center/library/DHR complex. But the population of the Area 2 schools cannot be handled by Barcroft and Barrett alone. Therefore, I have directed my attention to selecting between Barcroft and Barrett. I suggested Barcroft as more likely to be closed on page 163, but must point out that Barrett's very low enrollment may be reflective of the continuing change in nearby housing patterns. Barrett is more marketable than Barcroft. However, I am not ready to reverse my recommendation. Barrett School more nearly meets all the criteria established by the School Board as important to consider, with the exception of current enrollment, where Barcroft has the greater number of students currently enrolled. Barrett is simply the better of the two facilities and the School Board indicated no interest in remodeling of schools.

Area 3. The area generally north of Wilson Boulevard provides a different series of choices. I identified Reed and Tuckahoe as the two most marketable buildings because the functional space factor was not very determinative, except perhaps negatively for Reed. I find no persuasive reasons to change my first recommendation to close Reed and Tuckahoe. The students in the current Reed attendance area can easily be accommodated in surrounding schools that are more modern and more recently renovated, recognizing full well that Reed has some very fine facilities in excellent physical condition. As reported in the earlier study, the county has a need for additional facilities in the area and has an interest in the Reed building.

The choice between Nottingham and Tuckahoe is more difficult. While Tuckahoe is more modern and has a nice park area adjacent, Nottingham has all the basic facilities needed for an elementary school program. One limitation is the lack of two P.E. stations. Nottingham is in an area that should stabilize in enrollment and may even show some

growth from current size. Tuckahoe, however, is in an area that continues to show a trend toward fewer families with school-age youngsters. Also, since retention of excess property for future potential use is recommended, Tuckahoe appears to be the most marketable property due to its location. Thus, it probably could be rented or leased and be available for re-activation should the need ever arise.

Therefore, it is recommended that the following four elementary schools be closed after the 1983-84 school year, and students be reassigned to other schools as per Option #1, page 164 of the School Consolidation and Building Utilization Study:

School	Current Enrollment
Barcroft	288
Claremont	326
Reed	285
Tuckahoe	232
Total	1131

The fourteen schools recommended for continued use after the 1983-84 school year are:

School	Current Enrollment	Functional Capacity
Abingdon	246	550
Ashlawn	339	425
Barrett	242	375
Glebe	290	525
Glencarlyn	429	450
Henry	389	410
Jamestown	297	450
Key	536	650
Long Branch	433	525
McKinley	298	375
Nottingham	327	430
Oakridge	573	620
Randolph	410	450
Taylor	532	500
Total	5341	6735

It is believed that the staff report and these recommendations meet the stated request of the School Board for more specificity regarding the School Consolidation and Building Utilization Study. The staff and I stand ready to provide any additional information and guidance.

Charles E. Nunley
Superintendent of Schools
March 3, 1983